



Nature Based Advocacy.... A Pathway to Yes

Nature Kinder

Thomas Chirnside Kindergarten

Michelle Shaw & Kim Knersh

Wyndham City Council

Acknowledgement of Country

- I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which I work, Wadawurrung land and where I live and present to you today, Bunurong land. I pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging.

What is Nature Kinder?

- Provides an outdoor learning space which allows children to explore and engage in the world around them.
- Children are provided freedom to explore new surroundings and discover new and challenging ways to play and learn.





Benefits of Nature Kinder

- Learn about local cultural and geographical relevance- eg. indigenous perspective and history and local community groups
- Be a part of the junior rangers program- facilitated by local ranger
- Education about sustainability and caring for our environment
- Children have the advantage of the kindergarten program being offered in two spaces that allows for different learning opportunities
- Engagement with the local Karen community
- Children are able to practice risk management with the supervision of their educators

“Don’t just tell children about the world. Show them.”

Penny Whitehouse

The planting of a seed....



Where Do I Start?



Research

Children & Nature Network

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/>

NATURE CAN IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Spending time in nature provides children with a wide range of health benefits.



NATURE CAN IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Spending time in nature enhances educational outcomes by improving children's academic performance, focus, behavior and love of learning.

BETTER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
Learning in natural environments can:

- BOOST PERFORMANCE** in reading, writing, math, science and social studies ^{1,2,3,4,5}
- ENHANCE** creativity, critical thinking and problem solving ⁶

Seeing nature from school buildings can foster academic success ^{7,8}

ENHANCED ATTENTION
Spending time in nature can help children focus their attention:

- ↑ FOCUS AND ATTENTION** ^{9,10,11,12}
- ↓ ADHD SYMPTOMS** ^{13,14}

The greener the setting, the better the focus ^{14,15}

INCREASED ENGAGEMENT & ENTHUSIASM
Exploration and discovery through outdoor experiences can promote motivation to learn:

- ↑ INCREASED ENTHUSIASM FOR LEARNING** ^{1,16}
- ↑ GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING** ¹⁷

IMPROVED BEHAVIOR
Nature-based learning is associated with reduced aggression and fewer discipline problems: ^{18,19}

- +** MORE IMPULSE CONTROL ²⁰
- LESS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR ²¹

children & nature NLC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES THE JPB FOUNDATION ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON THE BENEFITS OF NATURE AVAILABLE AT childrenandnature.org/research

Natural areas promote child-directed free play that is imaginative, constructive, sensory rich and cooperative.

ENCOURAGING IMAGINATIVE, COOPERATIVE FREE PLAY

GREEN SCHOOL YARDS CAN:

Accommodate
different
ages & abilities ^{2,3}

Sustain
children's
interest ^{4,5}

Offer a
variety of options
that appeal to
a wide range
of play
interests ²

Promote
cooperation
&
negotiation ^{4,6}

Strengthen
links between
play &
learning ^{2,3,4}





Links to our Centre and Personal Philosophy

Children are strong capable learners and must have some control over their learning

Children must be able to learn through experiences of listening, moving, touching, seeing and hearing

Children must be given the time and opportunity to ask, answer, explore, experiment, investigate and just be at the pace they choose

Exploration, education and investigation around the first peoples of this nation (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) are necessary in the growth of children's understanding and development of our society and our country's history, further developing empathy and caring towards others



Curriculum Links

– **Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Outcomes (VEYLDF):**

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

Practice Principles (VEYLDF)

- 1) Reflective Practice
- 2) Partnerships with families
- 3) High expectations for every child
- 4) Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
- 5) Equity and Diversity
- 6) Assessment for learning and development
- 7) Integrated teaching and learning approaches
- 8) Partnerships with professionals



MINI-PROJECT PROPOSAL

Project Name: Nature Kindergarten Pilot - Thomas Chirnside Kindergarten (Navy Group)

Background/Context:

During the ECA Conference in Hobart (2019) we attended a nature kinder site and had a tour. This sparked my curiosity regarding learning in the outdoor environment. The research I have accessed has supported the implementation of nature kinder with noted benefits in many areas of a child's development (Refer to the websites below)

Michelle reached out to a local ranger for advice on running a Nature Program in Wyndham and passed on the details of a local ranger. Initial meetings with the Ranger resulted in a shared enthusiasm and willingness to plan and implement Nature Kinder at Werribee Park Homestead.

Objectives:

The objectives of the nature kinder program to enhance the children's understanding of the natural world, explore our local community while not relying on 'typical' learning supports such as toys, tables, chairs etc. Children have an opportunity to develop holistically with diverse learning environments catering to all learners and their learning styles and preferences. The children will have the opportunity to engage in the junior ranger program which is facilitated by Hsar Ju (Local Ranger) and learn about the local fauna and flora.

There is a community garden that the children will have access to (A garden bed will be allocated for the children to care for).

The intention of this project is to build a sustainable model for Nature Kindergarten that can be implemented across Wyndham Kindergartens that will support children's learning trajectories by:

- Boosting self-discipline
- Motivating children to explore and learn.
- Building stronger peer-to-peer and educator relationships
- Providing calmer, quieter and more intentional learning spaces.
- Fostering warmer, more cooperative relationships
- Creating opportunities for more autonomy and creativity.
- Support problem-solving and attention

Proposed Location for Project:

Nature Kinder will run for 5 Tuesdays during term 2 with Navy Group with a review at the end of Term 2, 2021.

The aim is for multiple groups at Thomas Chirnside to provide nature kinder in 2022 and support other services to implement Nature Kinder.

Date:	Tuesday (9:00am – 4:30pm)	Thursday (9:00am – 4:30pm)
Week 1: 31 May 2021	9:00 – 12:30 – Nature Kindergarten 12:30 – 4:30 – Kindergarten at Thomas Chirnside	Whole session at Thomas Chirnside
Week 2: 7 June 2021	9:00 – 12:30 – Nature Kindergarten 12:30 – 4:30 – Kindergarten at Thomas Chirnside	Whole session at Thomas Chirnside

Wyndham

Week 3: 11 June 2021	9:00 – 12:30 – Nature Kindergarten 12:30 – 4:30 – Kindergarten at Thomas Chirnside	Whole session at Thomas Chirnside
Week 4: 18 June 2021	9:00 – 12:30 – Nature Kindergarten 12:30 – 4:30 – Kindergarten at Thomas Chirnside	Whole session at Thomas Chirnside
Week 5: 21 June 2021	9:00 – 12:30 – Nature Kindergarten 12:30 – 4:30 – Kindergarten at Thomas Chirnside	Whole session at Thomas Chirnside

Methodology:

- Research and Training in Nature Kindergarten
- Consultations
- Action based research in situ
- Surveys

Deliverables:

- Uncover/assess research and training in Nature Kindergarten curriculum
- Family consultation with children and families attending Thomas Chirnside Navy Group in 2021.
- Plan the implementation of Nature Kindergarten project in Term 2, 2021.
- Evaluate project and report on findings
- Planning for further implementation

Summary milestones:

Activity	Responsibility	Complete by
Undertake research and training in Nature Kindergarten curriculum	Michelle Shaw & Navy Group educators	
Family consultation with children and families attending Thomas Chirnside Navy Group in 2021.	Michelle Shaw & Team Leader – Thomas Chirnside	
Plan the implementation of Nature Kindergarten project in Term 2, 2021.	Michelle Shaw & Team Leader – Thomas Chirnside	
Implement and deliver Nature Kindergarten in Term 2, 2021 for Navy Group	Michelle Shaw & Navy Group educators	
Evaluate project and report on findings	Michelle Shaw	
Planning for further implementation	Michelle Shaw	

<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-info-nature/learning-in-nature/plan-your-learning/early-learning-outdoors>
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/inquiry/inquiry/pages/bunkinders.aspx>
<https://earlychildhoodoutdoorlearning.weebly.com/>

Wyndham

<https://www.bostonnaturenetwork.org.au/>

- Michelle attended a 3-day session around bush kinder with ECOLN in 2020
- 2 information sessions were conducted for families to gain an understanding of the Nature Kinder pilot program and discuss any concerns.
- Families were also invited to attend the Nature Kinder site with educators and their families on the term school holidays to do a trial run of getting to Nature Kinder and see the site.
- The planning of Nature Kinder has been an 18-month process with extensive consultation with Ringers & Werribee Park.

In Scope:

Nature Kinder will run for 5 Tuesdays during term 2 with Navy Group with a review at the end of term 2. The aim is to provide nature kinder in 2022 and support other services to implement Nature Kinder.

Risk Analysis:

See Appendix A attached – Risk assessment

Stakeholders:

- Early Education and Care Services – Wyndham
- Thomas Chirnside Kindergarten Staff
- Children and Families enrolled at Thomas Chirnside Kindergarten 2021.
- Bush Ringers
- Adam Smith (Ranger Team Leader), Hsar Ju (Ranger), James Brivick (Area Chief Ranger) & Jordan Charter (Learning In Nature Program Officer)

Cost:

Initial Setup Expenses:	
Training	\$ 905
Resources	\$ 1485
TOTAL	\$ 2390

Ongoing program Cost:

Phone	\$ 15 / month
Transport	\$ 50 / month
TOTAL / MONTH	\$ 65 / month

Prepared by:	Michelle Shaw
Version:	
Project sponsor:	
Project Manager:	
Approval status:	
Approved by:	



Consider the following questions...



Why do you want to offer a nature kinder program?



What does the research tell us about learning in nature?



What are your personal experiences, and do they provide enthusiasm or fear about implementing a nature kinder program?

Why Nature Kinder?



The Nitty-Gritties



Excursion Permission Form

- Multiple dates were included on the permission form and the parents were asked to tick to acknowledge the dates.
- Risk assessment was completed in conjunction with the local Rangers.
- Have you considered a benefit risk assessment?

wynham.

Date: 15/03/21

During the 2021 Kindergarten year, Thomas Chiswick Kindergarten will be taking Navy Group on a fortnightly excursion to nature kinder located at Werribee park, K road, Werribee South.
Dates: 27/4/21, 11/5/21, 25/5/21, 8/6/21 & 22/6/21

There will be 3 staff members participating in nature kinder, with the overall adult/child ratio will being 2:11.

Any adult/parent/guardian participating in the nature kinder will be under the direct supervision of a staff member while assisting in the supervision and care of children at nature kinder. All parent/guardian volunteers assisting with the routine outings will be required to complete the Volunteer Form prior to nature kinder.

Parents/careers who are counted in the adult/child ratio **are not** permitted to bring non-kindergarten children (i.e. siblings, toddlers, etc).

All Children's Services Regulations and Wyndham City Council Kindergarten Services policies will continue to apply to staff, children and volunteers while on the routine outing.

The contact number on the day of the routine outing will be the Kindergarten unit at Council Offices: 9742 8122 or 9742 0777.

I give permission for _____ (name of child) to attend Nature Kinder on Tuesdays at Werribee Park with Thomas Chiswick Kindergarten on the following dates:

27/4/21 11/5/21 25/5/21
 8/6/21 22/6/21

(Please tick each box to acknowledge the date)

Kindergarten	Operating from 27/04/21 Term 2 dates: 27/04/21, 11/05/21, 25/05/21, 08/06/21 & 22/06/21	Nature Kinder destination:	Werribee Park
Excursion times:	Various		
Location:	Engaging in a nature kinder program at Werribee park. Our main base will be at the homestead. We will be exploring the grounds of Werribee park and Werribee river	Water hazards? Yes/No	If yes, detail in risk assessment below: Werribee River
Transport, including:	Working, public bus		
Emergency contact:	Melinda Shaw		
Phone number of excursion to:	(086) 5342 4825	(M) 0414613466	0432886620 (Nature Kinder mobile)
Item identifying nature:	00	Number of educator/parent/volunteers:	3 educator/
Adult ratio, including union warrants a:	1:11 Educator to child ratio		
Other:			
Adults attending the excursion:	<input type="checkbox"/> List of adults participating in the excursion: <input type="checkbox"/> Contact information for each adult		

© RCS | Integrated Planning Services | CMU | Wynham | 01 | 15/03/2021 | 15/03/2021

Parks Victoria

A wellbeing induction is a requirement from Parks Victoria but also supports the development of your risk assessment as the Rangers have expert knowledge of the local area

Parks Victoria require all excursions to be registered through Park Connect. You create an online account and register your excursion. There is also a space to upload your risk assessment and educators first aid qualifications.

Wellbeing Induction



ParkConnect | Home | Support | Education | Tour Operator | Research | Volunteer | Vol Fund | Michelle Shaw

Home > Education home > My excursions

My excursions

My closed excursions + Add Excursion

Group Activity Number	Arrival Date	Departure Date ↑	Group Name	Number of Students/Children	Number of Teachers/Adults	Status Reason
EDU-002370	27-Apr-2021 8:45 AM	22-Jun-2021 1:30 AM	Thomas Chirnside Kindergarten	31	6	Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Challenges



Safety

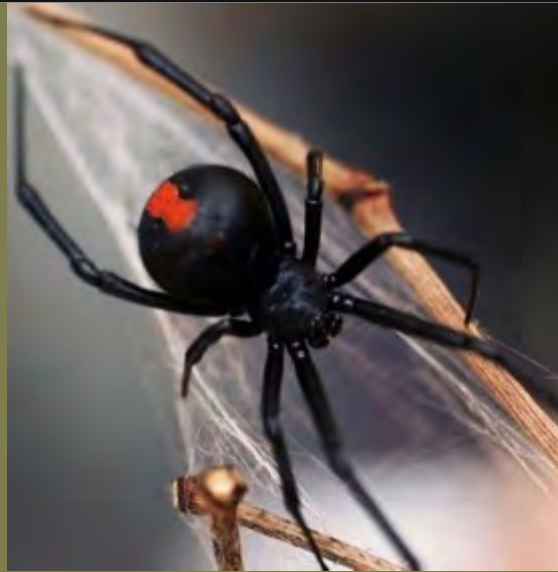
Children wear high vis vests along with a badge that has our number on it.

We had extra supervision from helpers at each of the session.

Educators had many discussions about potential safety issues and preventative measures

Hazards within the park

- Snakes
- Bull Ants
- Spiders
- European Wasps
- Bees



Public Bus

Kindergarten provides Myki cards for Adults and children
Children aged 5 and over need to have a child myki card.





Exploring Werribee Park



Junior Ranger Program- Hsar

Children were able to learn about Hsar's culture and his house in Myanmar and how he used to fish. The children were also able to plant a succulent to take home.





Logistics

- Parents to drop children off at nature Kinder site at 9am
- We will walk to the public bus just outside of Werribee park
- 2022 will look a little different

Discoveries

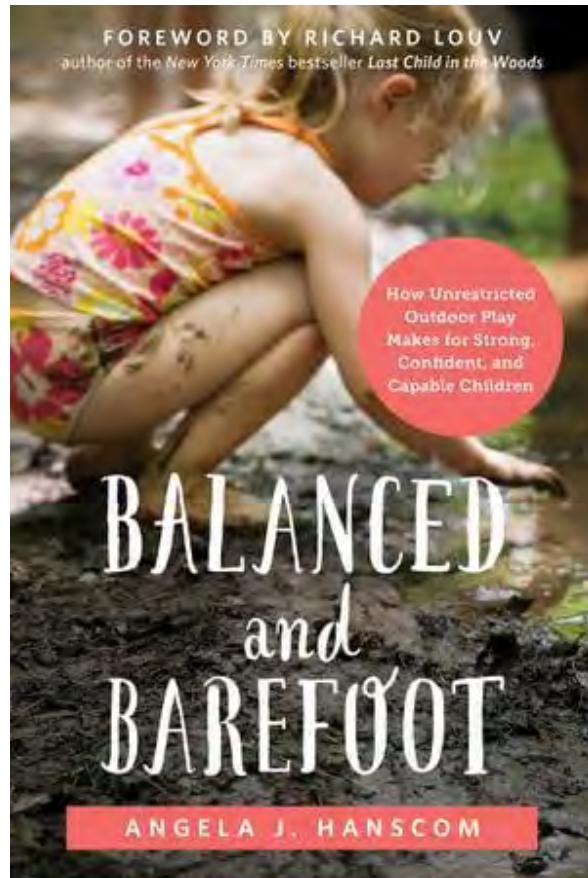


-
- Children were offered some resources to document their learning.
 - These resources are kept in a locked room at Werribee Park.

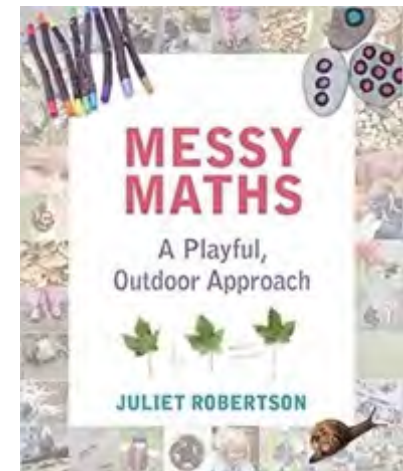
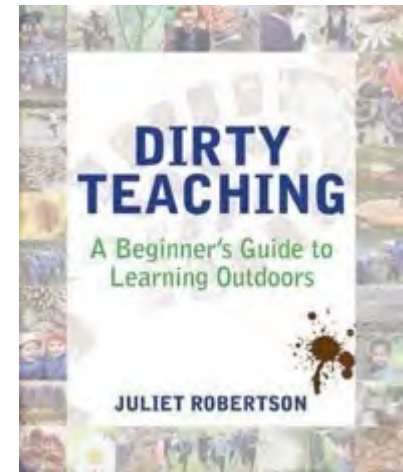
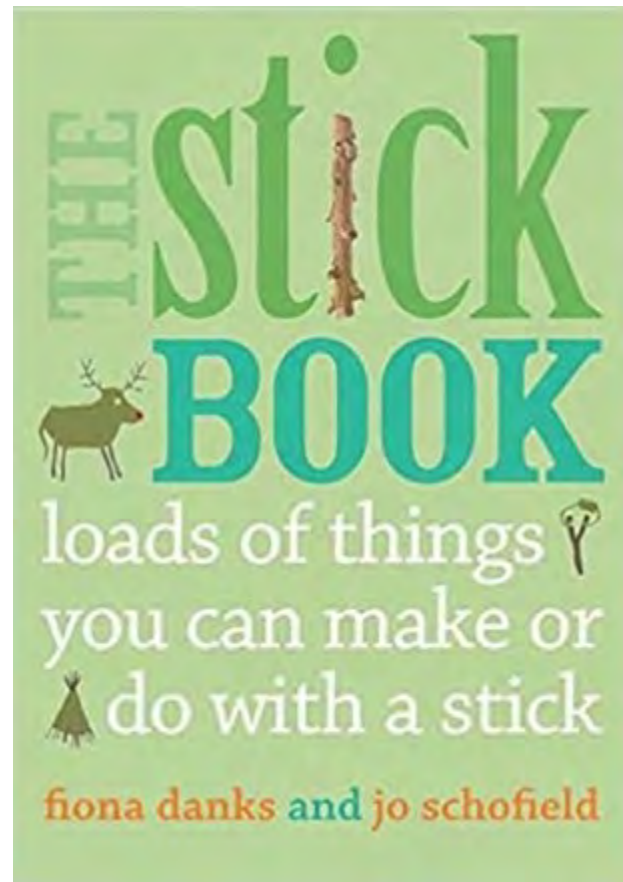
Staff and parent volunteers



- There will be 3 staff members: Ratio of 1:11 as required by the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)
- At least two parent helpers per session: If you are able to help you will need to apply for a working with children check (WWCC). Please see your child's teacher if you require some assistance. There will be a roster available to volunteer your time



Books



Nature Kinder Training Opportunities



ECOLN: 3 day training package including a bush kinder site visit.

<https://earlychildhoodoutdoorlearning.webly.com/>



Early Life Foundations: Bush Kinder- Starting an Outdoor Learning Program- 3-hour online session

<https://earlylife.com.au/events/102-bush-kinder-starting-an-outdoor-learning-program-online-event/>

Both of these training sessions are available on the School Readiness Funding Menu

Further Information

- <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/bushkinders.aspx>
- <http://www.wgkg.vic.edu.au/Home-Westgarth-Kindergarten>
- <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/learning-in-nature/early-learning-outdoors>
- <https://earlychildhoodoutdoorlearning.weebly.com/>
- <https://sustainabilitylc.education.tas.edu.au/programs/>
- <https://www.childrenandnature.org/>
- <https://earlychildhoodoutdoorlearning.weebly.com/>

Bush kinder

Claire warden - mind stretches
Sue Elliot

What do they see think and wonder?
Fauna and flora discovery
Snake awareness- cross arms to signal
Mobile phone to group message parents
Welcome to country

Use sticks or ricks to define space

What would we bring to the sessions? No tools or resources?
Need to sell to reluctant families or educators

Utas tree flip, poo flip

Tree shake, white cloth underneath
Creek water in Petri dish

Sue Elliot
Doug fagar- westgarth
Risk assessments
Ratios
Do we need permission from local aboriginal elders
Fluro vests for whole group
Protocol for weather
Books
Stick and stones

Land love
Floorboard for documentation. Children document and the we print photos and reflect at next session at kinder

DET Tasmania- Look at website for bush kinder ideas
The Orb

Contact parks vic for info
Local ranger to help in selection of site

https://parkweb.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/717573/Bush-Kinder-Handbook.pdf

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/bushkinders.aspx>

<https://earlychildhoodoutdoorlearning.weebly.com/>

<https://www.kidsinnaturenetwork.org.au/books-guides>